

THE GRID

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Board of Directors Approves New Headquarters Facility

By Jim Wallace, President & CEO

At the May 2026 meeting of the CMEC Board of Directors, the Board voted to approve the construction of a new headquarters facility to replace the present one that was constructed in 1955. After 70 years of use, the facility has become increasingly deficient in meeting the needs of CMEC to operate efficiently while providing quality electric service to the membership. I would like to detail the areas of the facility and present some facts that helped determine the necessity for the new facility.

- **Office area** — The location of offices throughout the facility is prohibitive to good workflow and communication within departments. Over the years, as the use of technology has increased, an IT Department has been established, consisting of three employees, that was not a consideration in past years. Space to house employees, as well as storage, is at a premium, and any growth will present a problem in this area. Maintaining the present building has become increasingly expensive and would require a considerable capital expenditure to remodel the facility to meet the needs of the organization.
- **Equipment storage** — The present facility does not provide



Conceptual drawing of the new facility.

adequate storage for the expensive equipment necessary to maintain the distribution system. The trucks are outgrowing the areas dedicated to housing them. In addition, the buildings do not have an adequate heating system to allow the equipment to melt or dry out after being in the elements for long periods of time during the restoration of the system.

- **Warehouse** — Much of the material needed to build and maintain the distribution system is housed in the main building on a dock that is prohibitive to access for material as well as restocking the material. The material that doesn't fit on the dock is spread around the buildings and yard in various places where they are able to fit. There is no consistency in placement of material.
- **Pole yard** — The present pole yard is located down the street,

Continued on 18B ►

approximately one-quarter mile from the main facility. Security for the pole yard is harder to maintain due to the distance from the office. Access to the pole yard is from a busy street that can cause problems for traffic when accessing the street with trailers and poles loaded on trucks. The area of the pole yard is prohibitive as well.

- **Overall security** — While there have been steps taken to provide security for the building by limiting access for the general public, the current location does not allow any further measures to restrict access to the facility.

The new location chosen for the headquarters facility is just east of Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center in the Coles Business Park. Lots 1 and 2 will provide approximately 24 acres for the facility and pole yard, providing not only adequate space for present needs but also allowing the facility to expand if needed in the future. The present amount of space is just over 4 acres. The location provides adequate access for CMEC trucks and equipment, as well as delivery trucks. The entrance to Coles Business Park has turn lanes that will allow traffic flow to continue while trucks enter and exit the business park. The stoplights to the south allow adequate access to Route 16 to travel either direction, and the Loxa Road to the north allows access to the north half of the distribution system.

The facility, which will include the office, equipment storage, and warehouse, will be under one roof, allowing for more efficient flow and communication between departments. A heated equipment storage area will thaw equipment in the winter to alleviate problems

caused by buildup under the trucks, especially with ice in the winter. Hydraulic systems will function more efficiently with warmer hydraulic oil. The warehouse will be at floor level with racking and will allow all materials to be located in one area. In addition, it will be located adjacent to the truck storage to allow efficient loading of material.

The office area layout is designed to have a more efficient workflow between departments. It is also designed with extra office space to accommodate any growth in the future. The center of the office will include a "hardened" area for IT equipment and a vault, as well as a conference room that will double as the Operations center should storms force the employees to take shelter. Security will be increased in the new facility, restricting access to the front lobby for the general public as well as

the yard area. The new facility will also feature a drive-up window to provide easier access for members to communicate without having to park and enter the building.

The pole yard area will allow adequate flow throughout to accommodate simultaneous loading of poles and material, especially in the case of a major storm. It will allow additional crew trucks in case the need arises to call in extra ones to assist.

The Board of Directors has not taken the decision to construct this facility lightly. The discussion began over a year ago, and many hours have been spent in designing the facility and choosing the best location. The Board has been involved every step of the way. The goal when this process began was to design a cost-effective facility that will meet the needs to serve the membership of CMEC for decades into the future.



Pole Top Rescue

Safety is our top priority, and we are dedicated to making sure every crew member is equipped to respond confidently and effectively in any situation. In May, our linemen completed pole-top rescue training, sharpening the techniques required to bring a coworker down from an elevated position safely.

This kind of consistent, hands-on training strengthens our safety culture and ensures our team is always ready to protect one another while continuing to deliver reliable service to the community. Pole top rescue training isn't just a drill — it's a lifeline.

Cooperative Donations

One of our Seven Cooperative Principles is Concern for Community. CMEC demonstrates this by supporting local members in our surrounding communities. Donations in 2026 have been made to the following organizations with matching funds from CoBank: Salvation Army, Mattoon Firefighters Local #691 Operation Sleigh Ride, One Stop Community Christmas, and Sarah Bush Lincoln Foundation. CoBank is a national cooperative bank serving vital industries across rural America.



Pictured left, Envoy Cari Shepherd of the Salvation Army, and right, Aimee Boswell, CMEC Director of Finance.



Pictured left, MFD Engineer Josh Welling, center, Kellie Moore, CMEC Director of Member Services, and right, MFD Firefighter Josh Bushart.



Pictured left, Aimee Boswell, CMEC Director of Finance, and right, Renee Fonner with One Stop Community Christmas.



Pictured left, Amy Card, Director of Sarah Bush Lincoln Foundation, middle, Kellie Moore, CMEC Director of Member Services, and right, Dr. Kuppuswamy Jagarlamudi, Regional Cancer Center Medical Oncologist.

Monthly Board Meeting Minutes can be viewed on our website: cmeccoop.com



Recognizing Excellence: Our 2026 Scholarships Announced

Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative proudly recognizes its 2026 scholarship recipients. Each year, CMEC awards six \$500 scholarships as part of its commitment to the seven cooperative principles, including education, training, and information. Guided by these values, we are honored to support these students and invest in our community's future. Congratulations to Aubree McBride from Findlay, Alaina Nolte from Mattoon, Rhett Lehman from Sullivan, Avery Beals from Charleston, Josie Armstrong from Charleston, and Brody Smith from Westfield.



Aubree McBride



Alaina Nolte



Rhett Lehman



Avery Beals



Josie Armstrong



Brody Smith



Clayton Gass



Jaxon Kearns

Randall Beasley Memorial Scholarship

Clayton Gass of Humboldt has been selected to receive the **Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative Randall Beasley \$1,000 Memorial Scholarship**. This scholarship honors longtime employee Randall Beasley, who served the cooperative from 1948 to 1988, retiring as the Director of Member Services. He was a Power Use Advisor and editor of "Hi-Lites on the Hi-Lines," advising members about wiring equipment, heating, plumbing, air conditioning, and insulation. Randall also had a column each month called "Watts My Line." He served in the Navy during World War II and was known for his thoroughness and technical knowledge. This scholarship was made possible by Randall's daughter, Sue Meyer, of Lerna. Clayton is the son of Brian and Brandy Gass and will be attending Lake Land College in the Engineering Sciences program.



From left to right: Sue Meyer, Clayton Gass and Jim Wallace.

Thomas H. Moore IEC Memorial Scholarship



Selected from a competitive field of 278 applicants across Illinois, **Jaxon Kearns** has been named a recipient of the **Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship**. The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives established this scholarship to support students in rural communities as they pursue higher education. Since its inception in 1996, when it awarded two \$1,000 scholarships, the program has grown considerably. This year, 17 scholarships of \$3,000 each are being awarded.



Warmest wishes for a bright and successful future to all our scholarship winners.

Youth Tour

Local students represent Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative in Washington, D.C.

Making their mark

Students representing electric and telephone cooperatives across Illinois recently returned from the 2026 Youth Tour, held June 15–22 in Washington, D.C., where Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative (CMEC) proudly sent two delegates from its service territory. The CMEC delegates were Callen Lanham from Neoga High School and Luci Barringer from Okaw Valley High School. Their week-long experience placed them among more than 2,000 students from 44 states, including 49 Illinois participants sponsored by 25 cooperatives statewide, continuing



a decades-long tradition designed to educate and inspire the next generation of leaders.

What did our delegates have to say about Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.?

“Youth Tour to D.C. was by far the best experience of my life. Getting to experience our nation’s capital and its history is something many people don’t get to see.

Some of the best parts about this trip were getting to see the National Mall at nighttime and Arlington National Cemetery. But by far the best part about the Youth Tour was getting to meet new people who I hope to stay in touch with. I would like to thank Coles-Moultrie Electric Co-op and all of the other people who make it possible for the Youth Tour to happen.”— Callen Lanham



“My favorite experience was creating memories with hopefully lifelong friends. My favorite places to visit were the panda bears at the zoo and the Lincoln and Washington memorials. I am grateful that I was able to go on this trip. The co-ops taught me that it is all community-oriented, and giving me this opportunity shows how much they truly care for their community.” — Luci Barringer

2026 Director Elections

CMEC elections begin on Sept. 8 and run through Sept. 29. Ballots will soon be mailed to all eligible members. If you have an email address on file, you will also receive voting instructions via email. You can cast your vote either online or by mailing in your completed ballot. Please note: All election-related emails and ballots will come from our trusted partner, Survey & Ballot Systems. The email will be sent from the CMEC Election Coordinator using the address noreply@directvote.net

Director districts up for election in 2026 are districts 2, 4, 5, and 6. Races in districts 2, 5, and 6 are uncontested, with only one candidate filing in each. No candidates filed for district 4, leaving that seat vacant and requiring further action by the cooperative's Board of Directors to fill it.



*District 2 Candidate
Mike Love*



*District 4 - No Candidate
This could be you!*



*District 5 Candidate
Andrew Fearn*



*District 6 Candidate
Tom Sherman*

TALK TO YOUR

TEEN DRIVERS

Remind your teen drivers to slow down and pay attention when kids are present – especially before and after school.

 **Safe Electricity.org**



Weathering the Storm:

A Week Coles Moultrie Electric Cooperative Won't Forget

By Summar Smith, Communications Coordinator

June delivered a pair of storms that Coles Moultrie Electric Cooperative won't soon forget. In the span of just seven days, June 11th and 17th, our service territory was hit with two powerful weather events that pushed our system, our crews, and our community to their limits. What followed was a remarkable display of resilience, teamwork, and the cooperative spirit that defines who we are.

The first storm arrived on June 11, bringing fierce winds strong enough to snap **25 poles**, pull trees into lines, and leave more than **3,000 members** without power. Crews worked around the clock, with our employees logging **565 hours** as they navigated debris filled roads and damaged infrastructure. Even though this storm didn't produce a tornado, it carried enough force to leave its mark. Recognizing the scale of the damage, CMEC called for assistance, and Norris Electric Cooperative answered the call and sent **eight linemen** to assist — a reminder of the strength of the Cooperative principle, cooperation among cooperatives.

But the storm on June 17 was in a league of its own. With **two confirmed tornadoes** touching down in our service area, the destruction was widespread and severe. One was an EF1 in Moultrie County, and the other was an EF2 in Coles County. Entire stretches of line had to be rebuilt from the ground up. We encountered **104 broken poles**, miles of downed wire, and trees tangled in equipment, which left more than **7,000 members** without power. Over the course of the restoration, our employees logged an extraordinary **1422 hours** of work.



To meet the challenge, **23 linemen from five Illinois electric cooperatives** arrived to help shoulder the load, reinforcing the cooperative principle, cooperation among cooperatives, and that we are stronger together. Those cooperatives were Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative, EnerStar Electric Cooperative, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, Corn Belt Energy, and Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

One of the greatest strengths of the cooperative model is that we never face hardship alone. When we called for help, our fellow Illinois electric cooperatives responded immediately. Their support meant faster restoration, more boots on the ground, safer working conditions, and a quicker return to normal for our members. This process is made possible by the Emergency Work Plan that is coordinated through the Association of Illinois

Electric Cooperatives (AIEC). It is designed to make mutual aid fast, organized, and stress-free for any co-op needing assistance. When a co-op needs help, they only make one call to the AIEC. From there, the AIEC becomes the central hub, contacting neighboring and sometimes regional co-ops, determining who has available crews, and coordinating their deployment. This streamlined system removes the burden from the affected co-op, allowing them to focus on restoration strategy and safety while the AIEC handles the logistics of assembling and organizing incoming assistance. The result is a smooth, efficient mutual aid response that gets boots on the ground quickly when Illinois co-ops need it most. We are proud to stand with co-ops across the state and country, because when one

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"Storm" continued from 18G

of us is hit, all of us respond. Our sincere gratitude to the AIEC and each and every co-op and lineman who answered the call and came to assist us!

Throughout both storms, some of the broken poles were not just distribution structures but transmission poles, which added another layer of complexity to the restoration effort. As CMEC's generation and transmission cooperative (G&T), Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI) plays a critical role in delivering the power that feeds some of our lines, and their rapid response was essential. PPI quickly mobilized its linemen to repair and rebuild damaged transmission infrastructure, working in tandem with our crews to ensure the backbone of our system was restored safely and efficiently. Their partnership underscores the interconnected nature of the cooperative network and the shared commitment to keeping electricity flowing to the communities we serve.

Restoring power after storms of this magnitude requires more than linemen alone. It requires a community working in sync. Throughout both events, IDOT, local road commissioners, and dedicated emergency personnel played a

critical role. Their quick action in closing roads, rerouting traffic, and securing hazardous areas allowed our crews to reach damaged sites safely and efficiently. Their support created safe work zones, protected the public, and helped accelerate restoration efforts. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and commitment to keeping our communities safe during some of the most challenging conditions we face. **Rodney Helton**

Just as vital was the support from our members. In the midst of long outages, uncertainty, and widespread damage, our community showed extraordinary patience and understanding. Many members went out of their way to bring food for our employees, small gestures that meant more than words can express. Every kind message, every wave from a porch, reminded our employees why they do what they do. Your support lifted spirits during long hours and difficult days, and we are sincerely thankful for the generosity and grace shown throughout the restoration process.

Across both storms, the combined effort totaled **1987 hours** of labor in just over a week. It was hard, physical, and often dangerous work performed in heat, humidity, mud, and debris. Yet every hour reflected the same mission: restore power as quickly and safely as possible for the members who depend on us.

June's storms were a powerful reminder of how quickly weather can change and how essential strong infrastructure and strong partnerships are. As we rebuild, we are not simply replacing what was lost. We are reinforcing our system to better withstand whatever comes next. And through it all, one thing remains constant: **No matter the storm, Coles Moultrie Electric Cooperative stands ready to serve.**



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

August heat can put your air conditioner to the test, making it a great time to check your system's air filter. A dirty, clogged filter restricts airflow, forcing your cooling system to work harder than necessary to keep your home comfortable. That extra strain can reduce efficiency, increase energy use and contribute to unnecessary wear and tear on equipment. Inspect your filter monthly during periods of heavy air conditioner use and replace it if it appears dirty. A clean filter supports efficient operation and can even enhance indoor air quality—helping you stay cool and comfortable during the hottest days of summer.

